

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 AID-05 IGA-02 MC-02 ACDA-07 EB-07

OMB-01 TRSE-00 MMO-01 PER-01 ABF-01 H-02 SSO-00

NSCE-00 INRE-00 /072 W
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O R 012037Z DEC 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5155

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

JCS

SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 5627

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, HO

SUBJECT: FUTURE OF MILITARY GROUPS

REF: STATE 292128

1. I BELIEVE THAT THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ADEQUATELY SIZED MILGP
TO THE SUCCESSFUL ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THIS MISSION
CANNOT BE OVEREMPHASIZED. THE REASONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

(A) IT IS CLEAR THAT U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE HONDURAN MILITARY
ESTABLISHMENT WILL CONTINUE TO BE VERY IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF THE
CENTRAL ROLE THE MILITARY PLAYS IN DIRECTING THE GOVERNMENT AND
ITS POLICIES. THIS WILL REMAIN TRUE EVEN IF THERE IS A RETURN
TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF THE DETERMINATION OF
THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN DIRECTING THE
FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF HONDURAN SOCIETY. THEREFORE, AN ADEQUATE
U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE PROMOTES REAL ADDITIONAL LEVERAGE FOR
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THE U.S. MISSION IN HONDURAS;

(B) THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IS A "FOOT IN THE DOOR" FOR ANY FUTURE CONTINGENCY WHICH COULD DEVELOP. TO ELIMINATE THE PRESENCE WOULD POSSIBLY LESSEN OUR FUTURE ABILITY TO REENTER THE HONDURAN SCENE IF IT BECAME NECESSARY TO DO SO;

(C) HONDURAS HAS A RELATIVELY STRONG PERCEPTION OF THE CUBAN THREAT. HONDURAN LEADERS REGARD THE U.S. PRESENCE AS AN IMPORTANT ASSURANCE OF U.S. INTEREST AND CONCERN REGARDING THIS POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT. REDUCTION OF THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE WOULD SIGNAL TO THE GOH A REDUCED USG CONCERN FOR ITS SECURITY;

(D) THE REDUCTION OF THE MILGP WOULD CAUSE MANY MEMBERS OF THE HONDURAN MILITARY TO REACT NEGATIVELY. MANY HONDURAN OFFICERS STILL HARBOR A LATENT RESENTMENT ABOUT WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS A U.S. FAILURE TO COME TO HONDURAS' AID IN THE 1969 WAR WITH EL SALVADOR. THIS LATENT ATTITUDE COULD BECOME ACTIVE IF THE MILGP IS REDUCED, THUS LESSENING U.S.' ABILITY TO MODERATE BORDER TENSIONS BETWEEN HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR;

(E) THE MILGP WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN RENDERING ASSISTANCE TO HONDURAS DURING THE DISASTROUS HURRICANE IN LATE 1974. IN ADDITION, ITS PERSONNEL RECENTLY ASSISTED THE GOH IN ASCERTAINING THE EXTENT OF FLOOD DAMAGE ON THE NORTH COAST. THESE ACTIONS ARE EXAMPLES OF THE DIRECT ASSISTANCE THE MILGP CAN SUPPLY IN PERIODS OF NATURAL DISASTER; AND

(F) THE MILGP GIVES THE MISSION A MEANS OF AFFECTING ALL SECTORS OF HONDURAN SOCIETY. ITS VALUE IS NOT PURELY MILITARY, BUT IS RATHER A WAY OF STRENGTHENING THE OVERALL U.S. POSITION IN HONDURAS.

2. I AM STRONGLY CONVINCED THAT THE REDUCTION OF THE MILGP BELOW AN ABSOLUTE MINIMUM OF 8 PERSONNEL WOULD DEPRIVE THE MISSION OF A SIGNIFICANT PART OF ITS INFLUENCE AND DAMAGE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS. FURTHERMORE, I BELIEVE THAT THE GOH WOULD BE DEEPLY DISTURBED BY WHAT THEY WOULD REGARD AS A LESSENING OF U.S. INTEREST IN THEIR FUTURE IF THE MILGP IS REDUCED BELOW 8. SUCH A REDUCTION CAN BE EXPECTED TO LIMIT OUR ABILITY TO PROMOTE U.S. INTERESTS AND PROTECT U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY IN A COUNTRY RULED PRESENTLY, AND FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, BY THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT.
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